

The New India

A BOOMING ECONOMY PROMISES A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR THE SHARMA FAMILY AND MILLIONS OF OTHER INDIANS

FAST FACTS

AREA: 1,269,340 sq mi (more than one third the size of the U.S.)

POPULATION: 1.2 billion, second highest in the world after China (U.S.: 309.6 million)

PER CAPITA GDP*: \$3,100 (U.S.: \$46,000)

LANGUAGES: Hindi (41%) and 21 other official languages. English is widely spoken in government, business, and communications.

RELIGIONS: Hindu, 80%; Muslim, 13%; Christian, 2%; Sikh, 2%; other, 3%

LITERACY: 73%, male; 48%, female (U.S.: 99/99)

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 63 years, male; 65 years, female (U.S.: 75/80)

*GDP stands for gross domestic product; per capita means per person. The amount is the value of all items produced in a country in a year, divided by the population. It often is used as a measure of a nation's wealth.

Words to Know

- **caste** [n]: one of the hereditary social classes in Hinduism that restrict association with members of other castes
- **globalization** [n]: free trade among countries on a world-wide scale
- **vocation** [n]: profession; career

Fifteen-year-old Vikas Sharma shares a tiny one-bedroom home with his brother and parents in Bangalore. The rapidly growing city is often referred to as India's "Silicon Valley" because it's home to many high-tech companies. They have helped transform this ancient, traditionally poor South Asian nation into a major economic power.



To get to the Sharma family's home, you must travel along a narrow, dusty lane, then climb a steep flight of stairs that is draped with the neighbors' drying laundry. Inside, a bed fills most of the bedroom, leaving little space for Vikas and his 14-year-old brother, Vishal, to sleep and share a small study table.

The Sharmas moved to Bangalore seven years ago from the state of Bihar in Central India. Their tiny village had no running water or reliable power.

"My parents wanted us to attend an English-speaking school and make our future in the big city," Vikas tells *JS* in fluent English. Most Indians consider the mastery of

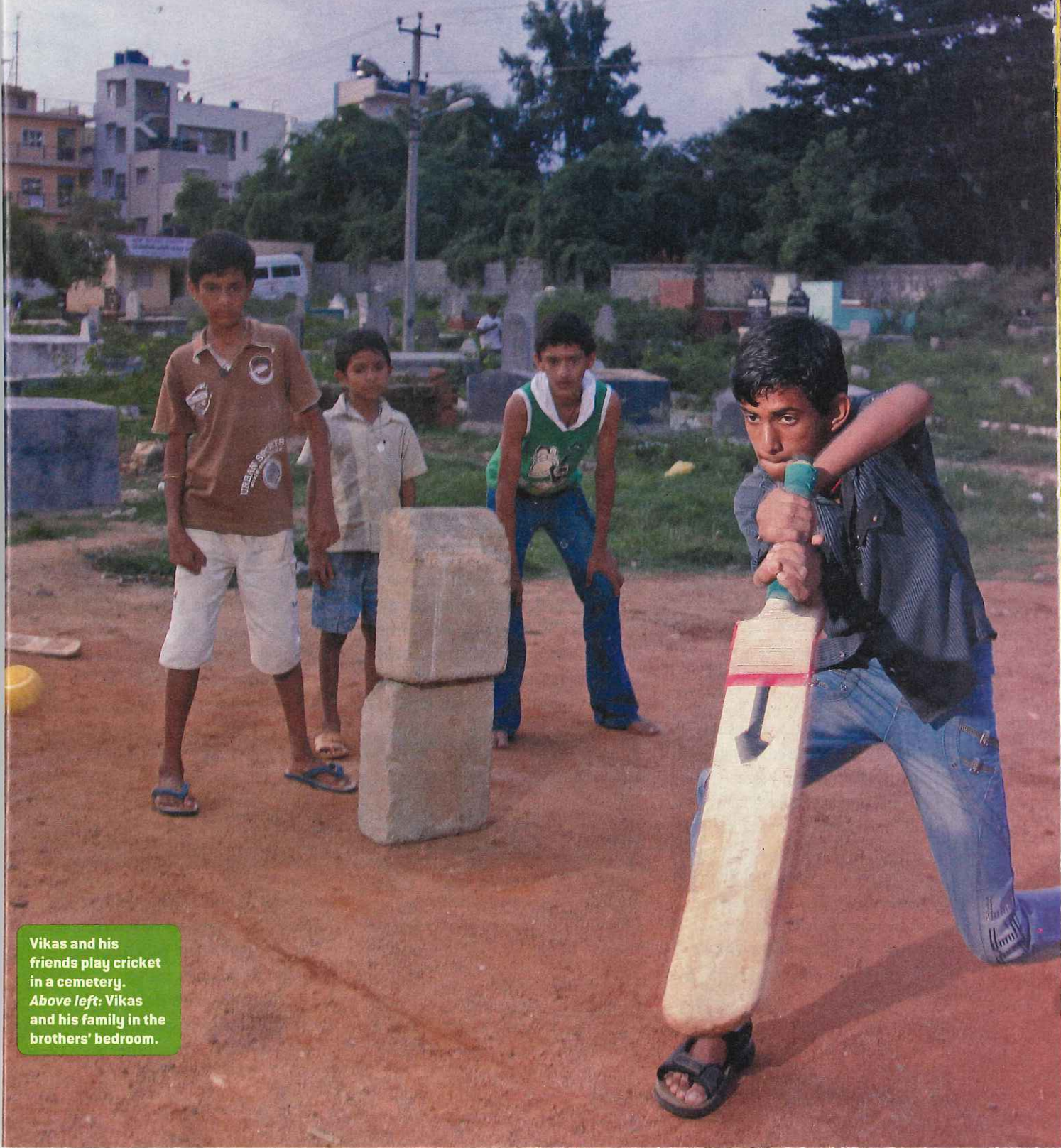
English, used in business and government, to be essential for success.

Although the Sharmas struggle financially, their story would have been unthinkable a generation ago. Until the 1990s, tradition and an economy dominated by the government made it almost impossible for India's poor to even imagine improving their lives and those of their children. Today, even though much of India is still poor, an increasingly open economy and a tech boom are creating new opportunities for millions of Indians.

Out of Poverty

In Bangalore, the contrasts between the haves and have-nots are still evident. The Sharmas live between those two worlds: one of lavish homes and gleaming

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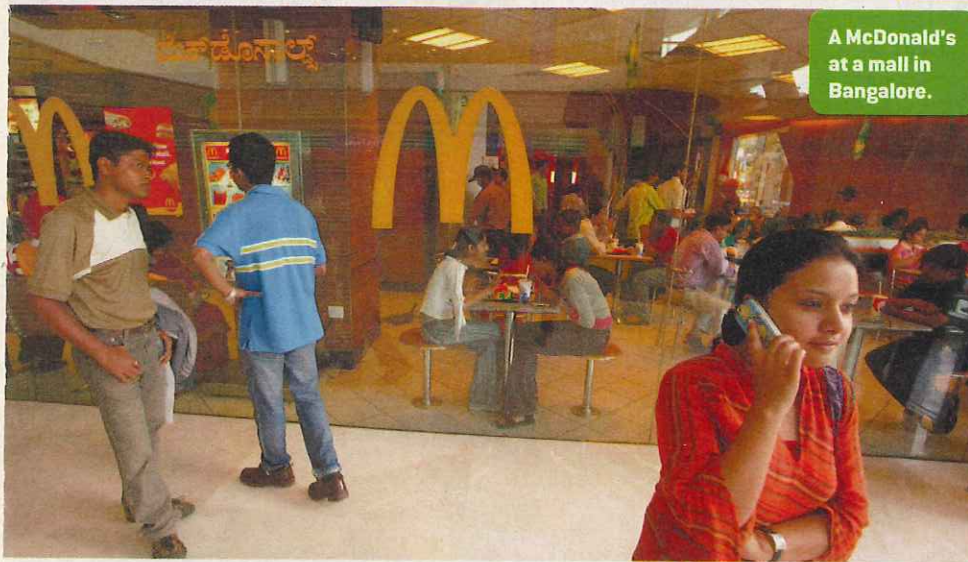
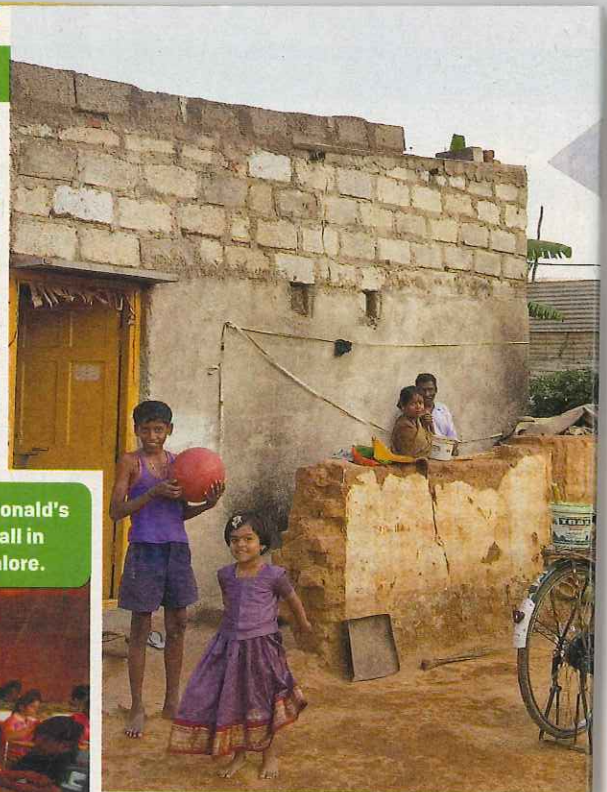


Vikas and his friends play cricket in a cemetery. Above left: Vikas and his family in the brothers' bedroom.

JS SPOTLIGHT



Children carry firewood in a village in Bihar.



A McDonald's at a mall in Bangalore.

skyscrapers to which they aspire, and the other of extreme poverty from which they came. For many poor Indians, it can be a struggle each day to find work, or just to stay alive.

India owes much of its new prosperity to **globalization**. Since the early 1990s, many international companies have set up offices here, attracted by an educated, English-speaking workforce and India's relatively low wages. American tech giants have been operating call centers in India for years. Now Microsoft, Yahoo, and other companies have research facilities for the kind of advanced technical work previously done only in the U.S.

But poverty remains common in India. The Indian government estimates that more than one quarter of Indians still live on less than \$1

a day. In the country's biggest cities, such as Mumbai (also known as Bombay) and New Delhi, the desperately poor live on the streets.

Bangalore's poor crowd together in slums, living in makeshift dwellings made from tarps or sheets of aluminum, and without running water or sanitation facilities. For

some of them, the idea of sending their kids to school is just a dream.

The Sharmas are lucky to be living that dream now. Vikas's father, Suraj, dropped out of school when he was young, and his mother, Manju, never went to

school. Neither speaks English.

They migrated to Bangalore in the hope that educating their children would provide a way out of poverty. When Suraj and Manju were growing up, there were few opportunities for men besides carpentry, farming, and, occasionally, construction. For women, there was next to nothing.

"Back in my village, women were not allowed to go out to work," Manju says, "so we came to Bangalore to change our lives."

Suraj works as a carpenter, making furniture for new homes.

“ I came to Bangalore to better my sons' lives. If I make carpenters out of them, the entire village will laugh at me. ”

Manju is a tailor in a garment factory, where she turns out shirts and skirts by the dozens with hundreds of other workers.

In their way, the Sharmas also benefit from India's new economy. Both parents are proud that they've



In a suburb of Bangalore, a family lives in the shadow of a modern office building.



Cows, which are sacred to Hindus, are left to roam freely in cities like Mumbai.



India Is a Parliamentary Democracy.

India's government was strongly influenced by that of the United Kingdom, from which the country won its independence in 1947. Like the U.S., India has a federal system, a union of states headed by a national government. (India has 28 states and 7 territories.)

EXECUTIVE BRANCH: The Prime Minister is the head of government. He or she is normally the head of the political party that dominates the Lok Sabha chamber of Parliament and has a five-year term. India's President is the head of state, chosen for a five-year term by members of Parliament and state legislatures.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH: Parliament has two chambers. The Lok Sabha (House of the People) can have up to 552 members, most directly elected for a five-year term. The Rajya Sabha (Council of States) can have up to 250 members, most selected by state legislatures.

JUDICIAL BRANCH: The Supreme Court is India's highest court. Its 26 Justices (including a Chief Justice) are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.

FOR COMPARISON, SEE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PROFILE AT scholastic.com/js/ourgovt.

never missed a payment for their sons' school. No one goes hungry, even if some days they can afford only *dal-baat* (lentils and rice).

The Sharmas are Hindu, the majority religion of India. For centuries, a rigid **caste** system kept many Hindu families like theirs from aspiring to a better life. But the country's economic growth, along with waves of migration from rural to urban areas, has reduced the relevance of this ancient social system in modern India, especially in large cities.

Vikas, who is in the ninth grade, is making the most of the opportunities he has. He studies hard and often gets the highest grades in his class.

The subjects he takes are similar to those in American high schools: math, science, history, and geography. In addition to English, he's also studying Hindi and Kannada, a South Indian language.

But what he loves most is the sport of cricket, a legacy of India's long colonization by Great Britain (see *MapSearch*, pp. 14-15).

"Cricket is my passion on

Sundays and any free time I have," he says. Since it's hard to play in the narrow lanes of his neighborhood, he and his friends often gather in an open space in a graveyard for games.

That leaves little time for other activities, aside from an occasional game on his mother's cell phone. But Vikas, who excels in biology, hopes to be a doctor someday. "I want to work hard and make my parents proud," he says.

Whatever happens, Vikas's father swears that he will not teach his sons carpentry. He says that it isn't a **vocation** for the educated.

"I came to Bangalore to better my sons' lives," Suraj says. "If I make carpenters out of them, the entire village [I left behind] will laugh at me." —*Saritha Rai*

➔ Think About It

1. What factors are contributing to India's new prosperity?
2. How do you think Vikas's life will be different from his parents' when he grows up?

MapSearch

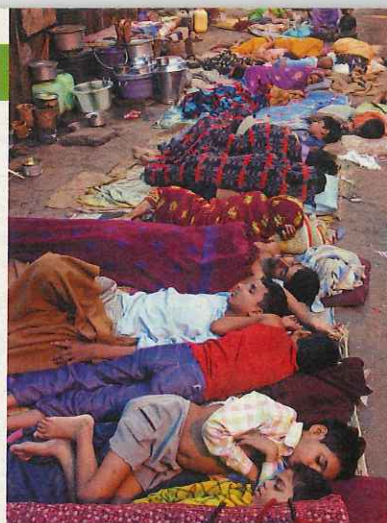


India

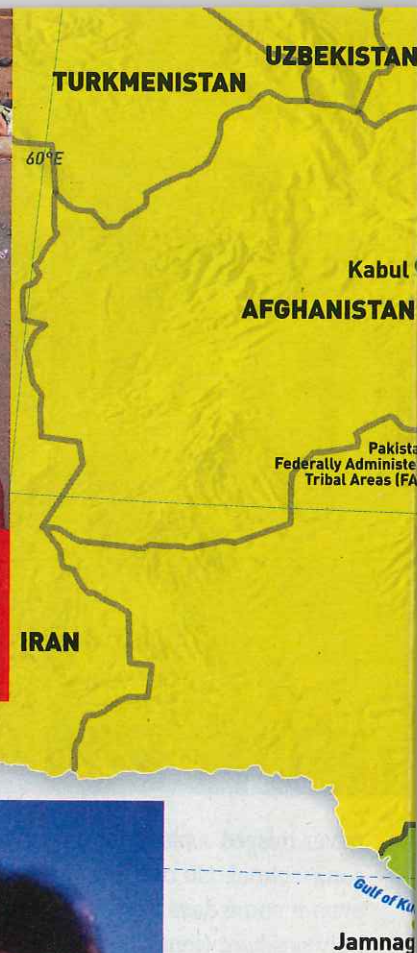
Located in South Asia, India is the seventh-largest country in the world. Its 1.2 billion people make it the second-most-populous nation, after its neighbor, China.

Starting in the 18th century, Great Britain colonized India. After years of nonviolent protests led by Mohandas K. Gandhi, India won independence in 1947. It was partitioned (divided) into two countries: India, which has a Hindu majority, and Pakistan, which is predominately Muslim. Although most Indians remain poor, their country is a rising economic power.

Study the map and callouts, then answer the questions below.



India has more people living in poverty than any other country. Estimates of the number of people too poor to afford adequate food range from 260 million to 600 million. Nearly 40 percent of Indians over age 15 are illiterate.



Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is India's capital?
2. Which countries border India, going clockwise from west to east?
3. Which mountain chain runs along India's northeastern border?
4. Which body of water lies to India's east?
5. Which river runs through Kanpur and Patna?
6. Which city on India's west coast can be found at about 19°N latitude?
7. What is the straight-line distance in miles between the cities of Bangalore and Kolkata?
8. In what year was India partitioned into two countries?
9. Why has Kashmir been a source of tension between India and Pakistan?
10. **Bonus:** Why do you suppose members of the Taliban and Al Qaeda are hiding in the "tribal areas" of Pakistan?

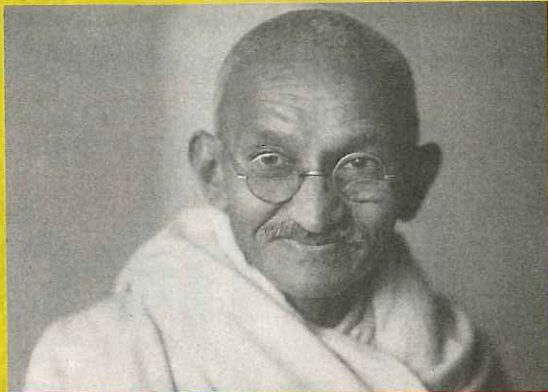


India and its neighbor Pakistan have nuclear weapons like the one above. The possible use of these catastrophic weapons has alarmed the U.S. and other nations. In 2008, the U.S. agreed to sell nuclear technology to India, in exchange for a moratorium (delay) on nuclear tests.

In the past 20 years, Bangalore has become India's "Silicon Valley." American companies such as Microsoft and Google have offices there, but home-grown Indian tech companies have also become multibillion-dollar businesses.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: RAGHU RAI/MAGNUM; DINODIA/HULTON/GETTY IMAGES; EPA/SHAWN THEW/CORBIS; STOCKTREK/CORBIS; MAP: JIM MICHAHON/ALPHEAN

India claims the mostly Muslim Kashmir region, but Pakistan and China also claim parts of it. The dispute has led to several wars between India and Pakistan.



Mohandas K. Gandhi was the leader of India's independence movement in the early 20th century. His philosophy of nonviolent civil disobedience inspired Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders of the U.S. civil-rights movement. Gandhi was assassinated six months after India's independence.



- National capital
- City
- International border
- Disputed border
- Disputed region
- Mountain pass

Scale: 0 200 MI / 0 300 KM



President Obama visited India this month for talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in an effort to boost economic cooperation between the two countries.



INDIAN OCEAN